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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a substantial change in the way education is structured, managed, and financed in Australia. The move toward more self-managing schools, with school councils, school charters, school global budgets, quality assurance, and other features has been especially apparent in the state of Victoria, where the Schools of the Future program began in 1993. In recent years, it has become apparent that the Schools of the Future initiative was not the final model required to ensure both equity and effectiveness for all students. The sections of this paper, a symposium presentation, give an overview of Victoria's schools and where they hope to go. Following an introduction, the second section, by Frank Peck, briefly describes the Schools of the Future program as it was conceptualized and implemented. The third section, by Susan Pascoe, analyzes the factors that were implicit in the reform, and the final section, by Howard Kelly, describes the current thinking of how the reform effort can be moved forward even more. The new initiative, titled "Schools of the Third Millennium," pushes the trend toward school self-management farther and contains a major emphasis on the innovative uses of technology in the schools. The Schools of the Third Millennium will push self-management, still within a government system, to its logical limit. The goal is for Victoria's schools to give all children a chance to participate in a system that enables them to reach their potential. (Contains 45 references.) (SLD)

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Schools of the Future and Beyond

A symposium

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SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE AND BEYOND

by Howard Kelly, Susan Pascoe, Frank Peck, and Tony Townsend

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Many of the reform activities underway around the world today can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s when reports such as those by Coleman *et al* (1966) in the United States, Plowden (1967) in the United Kingdom and Karmel (1973) in Australia emerged in a number of countries. A consistent concern expressed in most of those reports was related to the ability (or otherwise) of schools to make a difference to their students' lives. The Coleman Report (1966) summed up these concerns in the following paragraph:

> Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context... this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequality imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. For equality of educational opportunity must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's immediate environment, and that strong independence is not present in American schools.
>
> (Coleman et al, 1966:325)

These early concerns for issues of equity, involvement and achievement were later overlaid by concerns about economic competitiveness as countries in the west found that the 'new Asian Tigers' were outperforming them on the world stage. Formal reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the Carnegie Foundation's *Education and Economic Progress* (1983), the Committee on Economic Development's *Investing in Our Children* (1985) and *Who Will Teach Our Children?* (Commons, 1985) in the United States *The Black Papers* (Cox and Boyson, 1977) and *The Crisis in Education* (Boyson, 1975) in the United Kingdom and the *Finn Report* (Australian Education Council, 1991) and the *Mayer Report* (Australian Education Council, 1992) in Australia, indicated the level of government and public concern about the issue and created a climate in which the relationship between education and competitiveness on the international market became inextricably linked.

These two dimensions, the concern for effectiveness (the achievement of ALL students) and the concern for national economic development have been linked ever since.

In terms of the search for effectiveness, there have been a multitude of studies and a plethora of reports aimed at demonstrating that schools could, indeed, make a difference to their students' achievement levels, given the right set of circumstances. The school effectiveness research, as it has come to be known, has had the positive effect of 'helping to destroy the belief that schools can do nothing to change the society around them...and... the myth that the influence of family background is so strong on children's development that they are unable to be affected by school' (Reynolds, 1994:2). But, alongside this, it has also had the negative effect of 'creating a widespread, popular view that schools do not just make a difference, but that they make all the difference' (Reynolds, 1994:4).

Early attempts to make schools more responsive to economic imperatives included putting more power in the hands of students and parents to choose where they would go to school and for money to flow to schools based on these choices. An education voucher system was attempted in the United States in the early 1970s, when the US Office of Economic Opportunity first undertook feasibility studies in Gary, Indiana, San Francisco and Seattle and finally funded a voucher system in Alum Rock School District in San Jose, California in 1972. The trial was eventually wound up due to there being little evidence of increased student achievement. The final report of the Resource Allocation Study (Alum Rock Union Elementary School District, 1982) concluded that there was a need for funding to be targeted at specific children, rather than at the whole school, if outcomes were to be improved.

A continuing international trend towards devolution of many of the decisions and responsibilities for managing schools to the school itself, with the end point being self-managing, or self-governing public schools, has been perhaps the most powerful influence changing the understanding of the management of education over the past decade. Early attempts at this type of educational reform occurred in Dade County, Florida and in Canada, where the Edmonton School District pioneered many of the features we see today. In 1988, both the United Kingdom and New Zealand promoted a national system of self-managing schools with Grant Maintained (GM) and Locally Managed (LM) Schools in the UK, and *Schools of Tomorrow* in New Zealand.

In recent years there has also been substantial change in the way in which education is structured, financed and managed in Australia. The move towards more self-managing schools, complete with school councils, school charters, school global budgets, quality assurance, school reviews, and utilising the new technologies, are now a feature of most, if not all, Australian school systems. One only has to look at the terminology used in Western Australia's *Better Schools* (1987) New South Wales' *School Renewal* (1989), Tasmania's

Directions for Education (1996), and Queensland's *Leading Schools* (1997) and initiatives to see the emphasis being placed on accountability, marketing and management, particularly as they impact on school communities. In each case, the twin concerns of effectiveness and national competitiveness emerge.

The other major factor in the development of these new structures for education has been the introduction of the terminology of the market. Education is now a service to be delivered to consumers (parents and children) by providers (schools). This view of the world suggests that the quality of what is delivered and how it is delivered will be improved by competition between schools. Brian Caldwell, the conceptual architect of Victoria's *Schools of the Future* argued:

> Forces which have shaped current and emerging patterns of school management include a concern for efficiency in the management of public education, effects of the recession and financial crisis, complexity in the provision of education, empowerment of teachers and parents, the need for flexibility and responsiveness, the search for school effectiveness and school improvement, interest in choice and market forces in schooling, the politics of education, the establishment of new frameworks for industrial relations and the emergence of a national imperative.
>
> Caldwell (1993: xiii)

Victoria's *Schools of the Future* program commenced in 1993 and has pushed the boundaries of what it means to be a self-managing school further than any system in Australia, and perhaps the world. Drawing on the experiences of systems from all around the world, the *Schools of the Future* is a comprehensive school reform activity, one that encompasses governance, accountability, finances, employment, staff development and curriculum. The development of the *Schools of the Future* program has been reported to ICSEI on a regular basis since 1994 (Caldwell et al, 1994; Caldwell, 1995; Townsend, 1995; 1997; Peck, 1996; Spring, 1997).

However, the real issue in any educational reform relates to its ability to improve educational attainment for students. Tickell (1995: 23) argued 'Whatever its other merits, the final test of the decentralisation of educational administration will be whether or not it leads to improvements in student learning'. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that the self-managing school, in itself, has been able to create any marked improvement in student attainment across the whole system. At a Successful Schools conference in Victoria in mid-1997 Caldwell argued:

> Simply shifting responsibility, authority and accountability to the school level will not, by itself, have impact on learning and teaching unless explicit linkages are made.

> ...there will be no impact, and that is what the research has shown. This is most evident in recent meta-analyses on the impact of school-based management (SBM).
>
> ...They [Summers and Johnson, 1996] conclude, with justification, that 'there is little evidence to support the notion that SBM is effective in increasing student performance. There are very few quantitative studies, the studies are not statistically rigorous, and the evidence of positive results is either weak or non-existent' (p 80)
>
> (Caldwell, 1997: 2)

Other speakers at the conference supported this contention. Codding (1997: 15) argued:

> ...almost none of the widely advocated reforms - modular scheduling, open space, individualized instruction, different school governance experiments, vouchers, charter schools, the various curriculum reform initiatives - have survived or changed student performance.

and Hill and Crevola (1997: 2) suggested that:

> Improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools is not an easy matter. There have been many attempts to raise standards by one means or another, but reformers have invariably found that it is difficult to improve learning in a sustained way across more than a handful of schools at any one time.

What these comments suggest is that the relationship between the self-managing school and effectiveness is more-or-less random. Some students (and some schools) will do much better under a system such as *Schools of the Future*, but others will not improve at all. Worse, it may be the case that some students (or some schools) will go backwards under such a system. As Reynolds argues:

> Superimposing on schools a range of responsibilities such as managing teacher appraisal, starting school development planning and running ambitious improvement programmes is likely to result in the raising of the educational ceiling by competent persons in competent schools but is also likely to result in the floor of incompetence being left increasingly far behind.
>
> (Reynolds, 1994: 17)

In many respects, it may not be the school's, or even the school system's fault. Mann (1997: 6) quoted Steinberg (1996):

> [T]he failure of the school reform movement to reverse the decline in achievement is due to its emphasis on reforming schools and classrooms, and its general disregard of the contributing forces that, while outside the boundaries of the school, are probably more influential.

Given the difficulties implicit in trying to raise the quality of student achievement across whole systems, it is obvious that the search for the 'magic formula' must continue. Recent work in the United States indicated that restructuring might create significant improvements in student achievement at various year levels and in a range of academic subjects (maths, English, sciences, social studies) if the conditions are right. Newmann and Wehlage (1995: 3) described this notion as follows after examining schools across the United States:

> The most successful schools were those that used restructuring tools to help them function as professional communities. That is, they found a way to channel staff and student efforts toward a clear, commonly shared purpose for student learning, they created opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another achieve the purpose; and teachers in these schools took collective - not just individual - responsibility for student learning. Schools with strong professional communities were better able to offer authentic pedagogy and were more effective in promoting student achievement.

The Victorian Department of Education has always been innovative is seeking best practice for its education community. In the past few years, as it became obvious that the *Schools of the Future* was not the final model required to ensure both equity and effectiveness, the search for improvement recommenced. The American charter schools and the New American Schools and the UK Grant Maintained Schools models were visited and assessed. This symposium will provide an overview of where we started and where we hope to go. The second section of this paper, by Frank Peck, will briefly describe the *Schools of the Future* program as it was conceptualised and as it was implemented. The third section, by Susan Pascoe, will provide an analysis of the factors that were implicit in the reform and in the final section Howard Kelly will describe the current thinking of how the reform efforts can be moved forward even further. Finally, Tony Townsend will provide a few thoughts in conclusion, including a couple of questions that need to be considered by school systems everywhere.

PART TWO: SCHOOL EDUCATION IN VICTORIA

Background

The school system in the State of Victoria is the second largest in Australia with 1661 government schools. When the present State government came to power in October 1992,

the government schools system was operating very much along the lines of school systems the world over. A large bureaucracy which exercised control over about 95 per cent of the resources allocated to government schools was in place. In particular, the bureaucracy controlled the personnel function, appointing teachers to schools and presiding over employee relations.

The employment conditions of teachers were the subject of prescriptive statewide industrial agreements. Principals were left in an invidious position as they had little if any control over the selection of staff for their schools or over the terms of employment of their staff. Further to this, the career structure for teachers was based on seniority rather than merit, which meant that there was little provision for incentive or reward built into the system.

While the curriculum for Years 11 and 12 continued to be prescribed because of its importance for tertiary selection, the curriculum from preparatory grade to Year 10 was the responsibility of the local school. This led to gross inefficiencies, both in terms of the costs involved and the quality of the programs provided in those schools. In addition, the system had greatly over-reached its ability to keep up the necessary maintenance to an ever-increasing number of schools—in particular, the maintenance costs for large old schools, now with relatively small enrolments, had become a massive financial burden which clearly could not be met.

The system of bureaucratic control exercised over school budgets meant that schools had little incentive to implement efficiencies and achieve savings.

Aims of Reform

The incoming government in October 1992 set out to reform the school system. The three key aims of the reform were to:

- restore public confidence in Government education;
- add value to students' lives; and
- develop world's best practice.

In embarking on this reform, the Department of Education defined its mission:

To give Victorians the opportunity to benefit from high quality education and training.

The key elements of the State Government's policy for schools were to:

- provide all students with functional literacy and numeracy skills;
- require comprehensive and objective reporting of student's progress;
- emphasise the professionalism of teachers;
- make use of advanced learning technologies to improve student learning; and
- establish innovative, flexible and responsive schooling arrangements.

Reform Strategy

The reform strategy involved four main emphases, many of which were interdependent and proceeded in parallel. Firstly, it was necessary to solve the problems—to rein in the budget, to bring staffing numbers back within school entitlements and to reduce the bureaucracy. Secondly, it was necessary to consolidate the school stock which involved closing and selling those schools that were clearly no longer viable and were in need of extensive physical upgrade—the proceeds from these sales were then reinvested in the remaining school stock to bring about a significant improvement in school conditions overall. Thirdly, the Department of Education set about improving student learning through focusing particularly on literacy and numeracy but also on key learning areas in general and, finally, through adopting a priority for the introduction of learning technologies into schools. This was achieved by investing heavily in the new learning technologies, commencing with the installation of satellite dishes in all schools and then moving onto full multimedia capability. The target ratio of computers to students for the year 2000 is 1:5. At present the primary ratio is 1:9.3 and secondary is 1:6.3. The Department of Education is confident of meeting its year 2000 target.

Schools of the Future

All of the reforms were brought together under the program which was termed the *Schools of the Future* program, which was implemented as a comprehensive program covering all 1700 government schools in Victoria. Each school was invited to join the program and nominate which intake it wished to be involved in. The intakes were staged at six monthly intervals commencing in January 1994. Each school had six months induction and training prior to becoming a School of the Future. There were 319 schools in the first intake, 506 in the second, 509 in the third and 406 in the fourth and final intake.

Characteristics of Schools of the Future

Schools of the Future are clearly focused on the mission of the Department of Education—giving students the opportunity to benefit from high quality education. They are outcome-focused. Clear standards for teaching have been set and a comprehensive accountability framework has been established. They are resourced through School Global Budgets—single-line budgets which give schools control over the education dollar, as free from bureaucratic intervention as is practicable. High levels of participation are a characteristic of *Schools of the Future*—school policy is determined by a school council which must have a majority of parents and other community representatives. A priority has been placed on comprehensive reporting both to parents and the community at large. Most importantly, Schools of the Future provide the framework that principals need to be able to exercise real leadership in their schools.

The *Schools of the Future* program represents a shift in the focus of power from the central administration to the school. This has been evidenced in a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the bureaucracy within school education—a bureaucracy which numbered some 2335 staff in June 1992 will number 1000 by December 1997—and the fact that more than 90 per cent of the school education budget of $A2.8 billion is now allocated directly to schools by the School Global Budgets.

Being a *School of the Future* means that the school operates within the parameters of its own charter. The charter for the school contains the school's vision for the future. It is the key planning, performance standard and accountability document. Through the school charter, the school develops its own educational plans and priorities to address local needs and aspirations whilst incorporating Government policies and programs. It is through the charter that freedom, authority and responsibility can be transferred to the school.

Policy Framework for Schools of the Future

The policy framework for *Schools of the Future* is comprised of four component frameworks:

- the curriculum framework;
- the people framework;
- the school funding framework; and
- the accountability framework.

The Curriculum Framework

The Curriculum and Standards Framework provides the basis for curriculum planning from Preparatory Grade to Year 10—the compulsory years of schooling—over the eight nationally-agreed key learning areas: The Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and the Environment, and Technology. Schools are expected to use the Curriculum and Standards Framework to undertake their own curriculum development and delivery and, at the same time, this Framework provides schools with detailed standards against which they can report on student achievement. The Curriculum and Standards Framework helps schools to address critical areas within the teaching and learning process, such as the development of literacy in the early years of schooling.

For the senior years of schooling—Years 11 and 12—the curriculum is subject to the Victorian Certificate of Education which is administered by the Board of Studies, a statutory authority outside the Department of Education.

The People Framework

Responsibility for staffing schools, formerly a central bureaucratic function, now resides with schools themselves. Workforce planning to meet their own needs and having regard to their own circumstances has therefore become an important function of schools. The present government has been concerned to implement a performance culture throughout the school, particularly at the senior level. This is implicit in the contract system that has been implemented for principals and other members of the principal class. The system that has been adopted not only provides for the external assessment of the principal's performance but also confirms the principal as the key person involved in the selection of all other staff within the school and for their performance monitoring.

For the professional development of principals, the Department of Education has entered into a formal partnership with the relevant principals' associations and the University of Melbourne in establishing the Australian Principals Centre. Programs undertaken through this Centre include the Leadership Development Program, a principal and school development program, a coaching and mentoring program and a program on using advanced learning technologies.

For teachers, the Professional Recognition Program provides a career structure which recognises their vital importance in improving student learning outcomes. The Professional

Recognition Program creates a leading teacher performance management structure. The recognition incentive salary levels are accessed through the achievement of outcomes specified in the teacher's performance plan.

All teachers are required to maintain a Professional Development Plan. A current priority is to train teachers in the use of the new learning technologies—a program will be conducted to train over 6,000 teachers per year over the next four years in this area. The funds for the professional development of the staff of a school have been incorporated in the School Global Budget to enable individual schools to plan programs for the specific needs of the staff in the school.

School Funding Framework

Through School Global Budgets, more than 90 percent of the Department's recurrent budget goes directly to schools. As a single line budget, the School Global Budget effectively places the school in a position where it can make the fundamental decisions about the allocation of teaching and other resources in the light of local conditions. This means that the school has the flexibility to allocate all resources in accordance with student learning needs. In particular, the school exercises control over the configuration of its staffing and the appointment of its staff. This is a most significant reform as staffing accounts for the greatest proportion of a school's overall resourcing, more than 85 per cent of the total school budget for most schools.

As funding for schools is provided largely on a per capita basis—the core funding component of the School Global Budget—there is general acceptance that schools are being funded in an equitable and transparent way. In addition funds are provided within the School Global Budget for students from a language background other than English, students with special learning needs, students with disabilities and impairments, students attending schools affected by rurality and isolation, and priority programs which might be promoted from time to time.

The Accountability Framework

Key elements of the Accountability Framework are:

- the School Charter;
- the Annual Report; and
- the Triennial Review.

These elements are integrated into a cohesive framework which enables schools to plan for improvement, monitor achievement, report on performance, and review and evaluate their programs and performance.

Research findings on Schools of the Future

Cooperative Research Project

Since its inception, the *Schools of the Future* program has been the subject of a major cooperative research project involving the Department of Education, the principals' associations and the University of Melbourne. This project monitors the processes and outcomes of the *Schools of the Future* from the perception of the principals. Seven surveys have been conducted since 1993. The final survey is presently being collated and a report will be published early in 1998. Previous reports have been titled: *Baseline Survey, One Year Later, Taking Stock, A Three Year Report Card, Still More Work to be Done...But No Turning Back*. The trends in the surveys provide a very rich source of information on the perceptions principals have about the objectives and benefits of the overall program and the key policy frameworks, together with their concerns and issues regarding implementation.

The principals responses to the survey questions are fairly discriminating. They clearly distinguish sharply between what they believe to be worthwhile and the perceived difficulties they face in other areas.

Key Findings Across the Surveys

The following trends are discernible across the reports from 1993 to 1997:

- Continued confidence in the objectives/purposes of the Schools of the Future initiative.
- High levels of realisation of expected benefits in areas of planning and resource allocation, increased accountability and responsibility, and increasing realisation of expected benefits in the areas of curriculum and learning.
- High and increasing levels of satisfaction with the school charter as a means to provide benefits to the school across all the dimensions of school life—curriculum, learning environment, resourcing, management and accountability.

- Moderate to high levels of satisfaction with the capacity of the Professional Recognition Program to improve the teaching team in the school, in particular a recognition of the improvement resulting from review and performance processes for all teachers as part of their professional growth.
- Moderate to high and increasing levels of satisfaction with the School Global Budget to improve the schools capacity to utilise its resources effectively for improved student learning.
- High and increasing levels of satisfaction with the annual reporting process to provide information to school management, school council, the community and the Department of Education.
- Strengthening support for common performance measures used in the school accountability framework including high support for parent and staff survey instruments.
- Moderate to high and increasing levels of satisfaction with the capacity of the Curriculum Standards Framework to improve the school's learning programs.
- Continuing high support for teacher professional development planning.
- Principals have also reported higher than expected workloads and transition problems in moving to a devolved system although there has been a levelling off in these concerns over time.
- Principals strongly value the support of their colleagues and the local networks of principals. They also value highly the documentation of guidelines and procedures to assist them with local management.
- Principals clearly indicate their priorities for training and development to be in the areas of leadership, interpersonal effectiveness and team development. These match the changed nature of the work of principals in a devolved system.
- The overall level of job satisfaction of principals has levelled off from high to moderate levels as all schools have entered the program.
- Clear preference for the arrangements under the Schools of the Future after two years of full implementation.

Conclusion

So as we move into the 1998 school year, the situation in Victoria is that there is: a highly regarded School Accountability Framework; an increasing recognition of the value of the Curriculum and Standards Framework; a high level of support for the School Global Budget arrangements; and transitional concern in relation to full staffing flexibility given the remaining constraints of a statewide centrally employed teaching service which is subject to a Federal Award.

The Department of Education in Victoria, Australia, has successfully implemented a system of self-managing schools known as Schools of the Future. As we move towards

the third millennium, Victoria is looking at extending and varying this model to meet the challenges and to capitalise on the opportunities that might lie ahead.

PART THREE: VICTORIA'S EDUCATION REFORM : FACTORS ENABLING IMPLEMENTATION

Background

Reform to school education in Victoria provides a useful case study for investigating implementation strategies as the pace, scale and complexity of this reform is unprecedented (Angus 1995; Caldwell 1996b; Odden and Odden 1996). In the period from 1992 to 1996, the following occurred: administrative, financial and personnel functions were devolved from the central bureaucracy to local school sites; accountability and standards setting were centralised; standardised assessment was introduced; 350 schools were merged or closed; the number of teachers was reduced by 20% and bureaucrats by 50%; the end of school credential was modified and reaccredited; new options were established for the swelling ranks of students completing 13 years of schooling; a comprehensive literacy strategy was launched; and changes to the remuneration and career paths of teachers and principals were introduced.

The Victorian experience of education reform provides some interesting lessons for scholars, educators and administrators. This style of reform is *structural* in nature. It shares with *systemic* initiatives certain attributes: comprehensiveness, coherence, coordination, and clear outcomes. Systemic reforms generally focus on educational issues such as curriculum, assessment and professional development. The Victorian reform involved these elements but, in addition, involved a reshaping of the institutional basis of educational provision: the stock of schools was rationalised, the teaching force reduced, the bureaucracy downsized and reorganised, industrial practices reshaped and power relations changed.

Key Reform Elements

Most education reforms were introduced under the *Schools of the Future* Framework. This comprehensive reform strategy included accountability, curriculum, personnel and resources frameworks.

- The Accountability Framework required the establishment of a school charter, annual reporting to government and triennial reviews.

- The Curriculum Framework included the establishment of a curriculum and standards framework, the introduction of standardised assessment in years 3 and 5 against the framework and initiatives in literacy, information technology and post-compulsory education.

- The Personnel Framework attend to the career structures of teachers and princpals offering pay increases in a merit-based structure that included appraisal and individualised professional development. Principal selection and teacher appointment moved to the local level.

- The Resources Framework involved the allocation to the school site of 90% of the school's global budget.

Accompanying this broad reform initiative was a strategy to reduce the number of 'inefficient' schools. The *Quality Provision* strategy aimed to reduce the number of small schools in Victoria. While *Schools of the Future* was the centrepiece of the Government's reform the contemporaneous *Quality Provision* strategy was introduced for essentially pragmatic reasons - to cut the budget deficit, to reduce the number of small schools, and to consolidate the stock of schools to those of sufficient size to offer a comprehensive curriculum.

Immediately upon attaining Government, fifty schools were closed without community consultation. Disquiet was localised but vociferous. A more consultative approach was designed for the *Quality Provision* strategy. Local taskforces were established with the Minister retaining the authority to intervene. The *Quality Provision* document stated that 'where the Department perceives that students are being disadvantaged, because a school or group of schools is not willing to consider change, recommendations considered to be in the best interests of students will be made to the Minister' (DSE 1993).

Quality Provision could in theory have been introduced without *Schools of the Future*, but the decision to implement both together was a powerful one, as it left the Government with an educational reform in a rationalised system.

The Sociopolitical Context

The Coalition (centre-right) Government came to power in 1992 after a decade of Labor (centre-left) Government. There was a pervasive sense of financial mismanagement fuelled by the downgrading of the state's credit rating by international agencies, the collapse of the State Bank, the high unemployment rate and questions about probity and management of the Government's Victorian Economic Development Corporation. New right notions of 'capture' were applied to the union's relationship with government and to its bureaucracies. During the 1992 election the Coalition Parties labelled the ailing Labor Government 'The Guilty Party'! There was much talk of a 'black hole' of debt to be remedied and tough measures to be taken. The new government was prepared, energised and resolute. Its reform agenda was based around 5 principles.

- A *preference for market mechanisms* in the provision of public services
- A focus on clear *accountability* for results for public agencies
- The *empowering of the consumers* of public services
- The *minimising of government bureaucracy* for consumers; and
- A *professional and business-like management* of public agencies.

It chose to enact reforms across all portfolios simultaneously rather than proceed in a linear fashion to create a sea of change that overwhelmed the demoralised opposition and sapped the capacity of unions to respond. The education reforms occurred in this climate.

2.4 FACTORS ENABLING IMPLEMENTATION

In keeping with trends in Anglophone countries educational reform has become more sweeping and comprehensive. 'Innovations have become increasingly more wholistic in scope as reformers have realised that introducing single curriculum changes amounts to tinkering' (Fullan, 1991 p81). The speed and scale of the Victorian reforms are of interest to policymakers and practitioners alike.

This reflection on the Victorian experience will focus on the factors that enabled implementation during 1992—6. The authors are mindful that the Victorian reforms are

incomplete, (Caldwell, 1996; Caldwell and Hayward, 1998 and Gude, 1997) and that there is not a Victorian reform template which can be uncritically applied elsewhere.

In 1992 the new Government seized the window of opportunity created by the uneasy sociopolitical environment to drive its reform agenda. It had used its long winter in opposition to develop policies and forge strategic alliances and was ready to 'hit the ground running' on day one of government. The security of large majorities in both houses enabled a bold approach to implementation within and beyond the education portfolio.

- **Budgetary Pressure**
  The sense of financial crisis pervading the state and requirements from Treasury to reduce the budget meant that the Education Minister had to enact savings immediately upon attaining the portfolio. He opted to conduct reform in parallel with budget cuts bringing on himself an initial storm of protest and two positive outcomes – the image of a decisive, reformist leader and a distraction for his opponents from the core of the reform effort. The offering of voluntary departure packages rather than the forced redundancy of teachers and the decision to return to the education portfolio, monies accrued from the sale of closed or merged properties, minimised the potential damage from harsh cost-cutting measures.

  The implementation of the Victorian reforms during a period of severe budget cuts is of interest to policy makers. It gives some support to economists such as Eric Hanushek for his assertion that 'fundamental problem is not a lack of resources but a poor application of available resources. Indeed there is a good case for holding overall spending constant during school reform' (1996: 30).

- **Political And Technical Expertise**
  Despite the view of the new Minister 'that bureaucracies are inherently self interested' (Caldwell and Hayward 1997), the reform process was aided by the professional and technical expertise within the bureaucracy. The policy and political expertise of the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary were critical to ensuring support for the reform agenda. A keen eye was kept on communication and within-party support. The Minister proceeded with the support of his cabinet colleagues and the Parliamentary Secretary liaised with backbenchers to keep them on side, particularly in the period of school closures and mergers.

  The political nous of the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary was complemented by a highly skilled and energetic Director. There was a clear delineation of duties, the Minister set the direction for reform and the Director operationalised it.

- **Critical Alliances**
  Whereas the education union had been the significant alley of the former government the new Minister moved quickly to render *persona non grata* the education unions and the parent associations which had enjoyed a close relationship with the former government. Alliances were struck with

principals and local groups of parents. The principals were the foot soldiers of the education reforms and were rewarded with greater autonomy in the administration of their schools and with improvements to their remuneration and career structures. Parents were rewarded with greater authority on School Councils and more accountable schools.

- **Evolutionary Approach**
  The *Schools of the Future* framework was implemented using an opt in evolutionary approach. The Department announced an initial intake into the program and schools were invited to opt into it. (The Department was overwhelmed with an excess of schools volunteering). The experience of the initial group of schools was used to refine and improve the *Schools of the Future* model for subsequent groups of schools.

  The other sense in which the Victorian reforms are evolutionary is that they built upon a culture of school based decision making. The former government had attempted similar reforms in its *Taking Schools Into the 1990's* and its *District Provision* programs. It was frustrated in its attempts to implement these reforms. 'The Victorian developments build on almost two decades of change that has given schools increasing autonomy and accountability...most of the changes now being implemented were identified over a decade ago but the political will and capacity to drive through a strong change agenda have been lacking' (Caldwell and Hill 1996: 15).

- **Congruence**
  One in three students in Victoria are educated in non government schools. Site based management including financial management and accountability, staff selection and oversight by School Councils have been in place in the non government sector for decades. The educational and broader community was not faced with conceptual dissonance in the reform underpinnings. Further many educators are up to date with international literature on school reform and effectiveness and were familiar with the debate surrounding site based management.

REFLECTION

Research into site based management indicates that there is no empirical base for assuming that local decision making leads to improved student learning outcomes (Elmore, 1996 Summers and Johnson, 1996, Townsend, 1996). The Victorian reforms in the period 1992—1996 concentrated on devolving financial and administrative functions to schools, to making them more accountable and to establishing a curriculum and standards framework. This provides a necessary but not sufficient environment for improving students learning. The next reform phase will need to address matters related to pedagogy, school organisation and the use of information technology for the full potential of *Schools*

of the Future to be realised.

PART FOUR: *SCHOOLS OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM*: THE FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE REFORM

On June 3 last year, the Minister for Education, the Hon Phillip Gude, launched a major initiative under the banner *Schools of the Third Millennium*. This generic title has established the framework through which the Minister has challenged the Victorian community to reflect on new and innovative ways that schools can operate, through which higher standards can be achieved and a more effective and flexible system is in place to deliver the needs of a diverse community.

Tony Townsend refers in his introductory comments to the *Schools of the Future* program, that commenced in 1993, as having "pushed the boundaries of what it means to be a self-managed school further than any system in Australia and perhaps the world". It is fair to say that the imperative that underpins this project, *Schools of the Third Millennium*, is to push further. The rationale behind proceeding further and chart new territory is succinctly stated by the Minister in a Speech (17/10/97):

> I fully acknowledge and applaud the achievements of schools under the *Schools of the Future* banner but I clearly recognise that '<u>one size does not fit all</u>'.
>
> This is the reason that I have asked for advice on ways in which models can be brought in that will allow schools to grow at their own pace while meeting strict quality and accountability provision.

The Minister has established three Working Groups under the framework *Schools of the Third Millennium*. Each Group is chaired by a significant member of the business community and has a senior executive as the Deputy. The Groups are:

- Innovative Use of Multimedia
- Autonomous Schools
- Quality Management

I will concentrate in this session on the work of the first two Groups, Innovative Use of Multimedia and Autonomous Schools, to give some flavour of our work in progress. The third issue, Quality Management, will be addressed in tomorrows symposium on 'Building on Schools Accountability and Review' which describes the Victorian Education Department's accountability processes.

Multimedia and *Schools of the Third Millennium*

A fundamental challenge is to ensure that all of our schools, no matter where they are on the continuum of sophistication in the use of multimedia, are able to integrate multimedia into the best teaching and learning programs possible. This area is too important to the education of our students to be simply left to those schools that are already well advanced and have either been specifically resourced to be ahead of the game and/or have staff with particular expertise. As we prepare schools for the third millennium, this area is one that requires central leadership. It is of interest to note that in an overall push to devolution in education, there is a strong commitment to delineate an overall strategy centrally that schools will develop in their own settings. It is in this context that the following path has been chosen for Victorian schools.

1. In early 1998 - a Learning Technologies Statement setting targets for each school to achieve by the end of the year 2000 will be in front of each School Council.

2. By March 1998 - a Teacher Skills Matrix to be in the hands of each teacher to enable them to assess themselves, set targets and move through the three levels of competence that have been established. A CD ROM package custom made to link this Matrix will be available in multiple copies in each school.

3. By June 1998 - All Victorian Government schools to be connected by a minimum 64K ISDN link to the Government Vic One, Wide Area Network. This will give all our schools access to links and Internet capabilities previously available to a minority.

4. By October/November 1998 - All schools to have access to the Department's Digital Resource Centre. This will be the main repository of educational content for schools to use in their program.

As we move forward, it is clear that the area of multimedia is a major part of ensuring that all our schools have the best access and content available. It is the clear intention of Government in the Vic 21 agenda that we will put our schools at world benchmarks by the end of 2000.

Autonomous Schools

While the area of Multimedia needs a refocus on the Centre to provide the framework and the infrastructure to get things moving, the area of governance is one that needs to be

opened up and devolved further. From our perspective, it is fair to say that, at this stage, we have not moved to a purchaser provider orientation as much as we would like.

While our schools are reasonably competitive, they are not as independent as they could be. The task of this part of the project is to chart this new territory and provide options. We are proud of the achievements of *Schools of the Future* but know that there are a minority of schools at one end of the spectrum who wish to be far more self-governing and have a very different set of relationships to the Department than they can at present. At the other end of the spectrum, we are keenly aware that many of our smaller schools find the current structure onerous as they attempt to fulfil their responsibilities and they would like to have options open to them to federate in some way. Such structures currently only exist in an informal sense not in a formal sense of governance models.

It is in this overall context that we have set about the task of developing new models of governance along the purchaser/provider spectrum. All such work needs to address key issues on capital and recurrent financing, staffing configuration and employee relations and the degree of ownership and governance structure at the local level.

Of importance at this juncture is to stress the fact that work on this area, and to a lesser extent, on Multimedia, will be informed by an open public consultation which is now underway. It is our plan to present our Minister with a range of options as a result of the work of the groups and the input of the consultation by the end of March 1998.

It is important to emphasise that exploring a range of options in relation to governance is not a "smoke-screen" to Balkanise the system and undermine public education. On the contrary, the aim is to ensure that we have a vibrant and competitive public system.

We are approaching the work with some key undertakings in place regardless of the options developed, accepted and possibly implemented in 1999. The following platforms will not change:

- There will be no compulsory fees
- Local access to the nearest (neighbourhood) school is guaranteed
- The student code of conduct and placement of students whose behaviour is not acceptable will apply in all government schools
- All government schools will continue to provide education programs within the curriculum and assessment policy determined by the Board of Studies and the Department
- The accountability framework (charter, annual report, triennial review, audit) will continue to apply for all government schools
- That a performance management system would operate.

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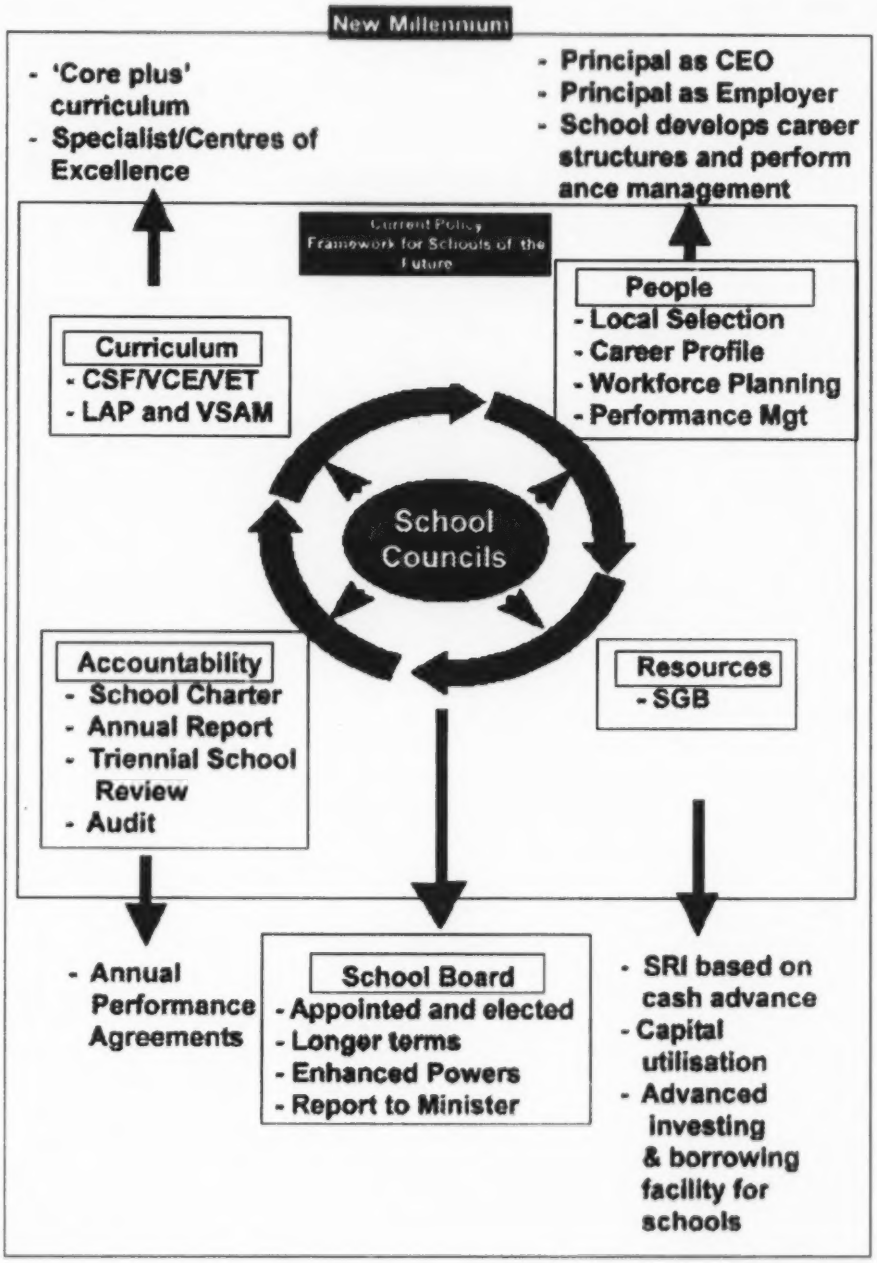
This approach was underpinned in a Speech by the Premier, Jeffrey Kennett, to the Australian National University on 24/9/97 when he referred to the project in these terms: "*With experience of the present model, schools are making it quite clear they want more autonomy. We are likely, in the future, to see them becoming far more independent, and to establish partnerships with community, public and private sector organisations outside the school gate in order to develop specialism in particular areas. These developments, however, will occur within the context of a State system which continues to guarantee access for local students.*"

Conceptual Framework

In broad terms, our initial thinking which will be impacted upon by the consultation assumes that there is a series of "clip on options" to the current model that varies across a spectrum.

In diagrammatic form, it looks like this at this stage.



You will notice that it is structured in such a way that moves in a logical fashion from our current framework, whilst keeping some things constant.

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From our point of view, what is exciting about the project is the opportunity to explore options that can be expanded in any one or more of the areas previously described, that is:

- Curriculum
- People
- Resources
- Accountability

The degree to which we move will also be strongly shaped by the public consultation that we have initiated. For example, there are schools that have indicated a strong desire to move on the curriculum front particularly in terms of specialism and expanding their capacity to forge partnerships with those beyond the school gate, this can be accommodated.

I imagine that we will see a range of models across a spectrum being made available to our system. In broad discussions so far, this overall concept has been well supported in Forums with Principals and Council Presidents. It is through this overall direction that Government policy of Centres of Excellence and Open Schools announced at the last election can be implemented.

In addition, there is a strong commitment to ensuring a range of options are open to smaller schools both within the current model of *Schools of the Future* and beyond to consider models that aggregate their strengths and open up possibilities of planning for an area beyond their immediate community.

Taken together, the work we are engaged in is both fascinating, daunting and complex. I am confident that if we see through these reforms in an open dialogue with schools and the broader community keep coming back to the constants and the fact that schools in terms of governance can stay as they are, we will see these issues through. We are not interested in standing still as much remains to be explored, shaped and implemented in our State.

It is our aim to enter the next century with a diverse and robust public education system that is attractive and ensure that it is a growing system, not a residual one. I am confident that the *Schools of the Third Millennium* Project will give us the platform to shape education for the start of the next century.

CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the above presentation, the Victorian Government is not resting on its laurels when it comes to the continuing search for improvement in schools. The *Schools of the Third Millennium* project, coming so close on the heels of the *Schools of the Future* project, is pushing the boundaries of self-management (but within a government system) to its logical limit. But still there is that nagging concern, that if the self-managing school has, so far, been unable to deliver the goods in terms of student achievement, then how will making them even more self-managing make the difference?

We might argue, as Minzey (1981) has, that in the past educational change has been similar to rearranging the toys in the toy box, when what we really needed was a whole new box. If so what might that box look like? During the ACEA Virtual conference, Beare (1997: 1) posed a question of a similar kind.

> If, as an educational planner, you were presented with a greenfields site on which a new town or suburb was to be built to accommodate dwellings for approximately 22,000 people, what schools or educational buildings would you offer the developer?

He argues that there are some things that you would not have, including:

- the egg-crate classrooms and long corridors;
- the notion of set class groups based on age-grade structures;
- The division of the school day into standard slabs of time;
- The linear curriculum parceled into step-by-step gradations;
- The parceling of human knowledge into pre-determined boxes called 'subjects';
- The division of staff by subject specialisation;
- The allocation of most school tasks to the person called 'teacher';
- The assumption that learning takes place in a place called 'school';
- The artificial walls that barricade school from home and community;
- The notion of a stand-alone school isolated from other schools;
- The notion of a school system bounded by a locality such as a state or even country;
- The limitation of 'formal schooling' to twelve years and between the ages of five and eighteen.

(adapted from Beare, 1997: 2-4)

If we accept his arguments about what schools in the future should not be, we have some indication of the task facing school communities, teachers and parents on the one hand, and governments and educational policy makers, on the other.

Perhaps the autonomous school, particularly the option of schools working with each other and with community agencies, might enable communities to redesign schools so they fit the needs of the future. We can then ask, and perhaps we haven't yet done this very well either, what are the needs of the future, both for individuals and for the society as a whole?

We might suggest that, for the first time in history, the needs of society and the needs of the individual might be identical. The following list of skills for the future is a starting point:

- a strong skill capability in literacy, numeracy and computer technology;
- cultural , artistic and human sensitivities;
- the ability to change work as work changes;
- the ability to learn and relearn;
- the ability to make decisions, individually and in groups;
- the ability to use leisure time profitably;
- the ability to make maximum use of diminishing resources;
- a commitment to work with others to improve the community;
- the ability to use technology as a means to an end.

However, it is important that the core-plus view of curriculum, considered in the previous section, provides what Townsend (1994: 113) described as 'maintaining a core of state-mandated requirements for all students, plus the curriculum determined locally (based on the needs of the children from particular communities)' and that there is time and resources available for both. The central concern for education in the future is that all children get a chance to participate in a system that enables them to reach their potential.

The Victorian Department of Education has made many changes to the system over the past five years. Not all have been acceptable to everyone, but as the Chinese proverb suggests, we have certainly 'lived in interesting times'. The next five five years promise to be just as interesting.

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